

**Testimony of Christy Kovel, Director of Public Policy
Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee
Wednesday February 23, 2022**

Honorable Chairmen, Ranking Members, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Christy Kovel and I am the Director of Public Policy for the Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter.

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 regarding the Alzheimer's State Respite Program.

Currently there are 80,000 people in Connecticut living with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that this number will rise to 91,000 people by 2025. Connecticut is the 6th oldest state in the nation and age remains the biggest risk factor to developing Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.

More than 80% of the help provided to older adults in the United States comes from family members, friends, or other unpaid caregivers — and nearly half of families caring for an older adult are caring for someone with dementia.

Respite services provide temporary, substitute care that gives the caregiver a break from his or her caregiving duties. The services can be provided in a variety of settings, including the individual's home, adult day centers, and nursing homes. This temporary relief enables caregivers to ensure their loved ones continue to receive quality care while giving themselves an opportunity to manage and improve their own health which is often compromised.

With the average yearly cost of nursing home care over \$165,000, increasing funding for the Alzheimer's Respite Care program is more cost-efficient and honors consumer choice. On average, a person with Alzheimer's lives four to eight years after diagnosis, but can live as long as 20 years, depending on other factors. Home and Community Based Services including the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program are the less costly option and create autonomy in the home.

The individuals that contact our 24 hour Helpline often are in need of services and supports immediately as they've been trying to care for their loved one but are struggling with the effects of caregiving on their own health.

Alzheimer's takes a devastating toll on caregivers. Compared with caregivers of people without dementia, twice as many caregivers of those with dementia indicate substantial emotional, financial and physical difficulties.

We know increasing the funding for this program is vitally needed to meet the growing numbers of people who will be impacted. Additionally, we'd like to recommend increased transparency on where the dollars are in the budget to accurately reflect the utilization.

Adding funding for this program to meet the growing needs of Connecticut's changing demographics is good policy, fiscally smart, and supports dementia friendly communities.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide comment today.